



Old Tom



History *in the* Tasting



The Puss 'n' Mew

A gin vending invention, used to escape prosecution under the 18th Century Gin Acts.

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An Introduction to Old Tom Gin

Modern Old Tom gins taste slightly sweeter than London Dry gins. This sweetening of the gin is achieved by adding sugar syrup to a base gin.

Other flavours are added too - often (but not always) is a hint of liquorice.

Both characteristics of modern Old Tom gins go all the way back to its 18th Century origins.

The original Old Tom gins were often made with very poor quality alcohol in people's homes.

Adding sweeteners and flavourings to the alcohol hid the questionable taste, making it (just about) drinkable. Liquorice root was a favourite additive, given its strong flavour.

Today, top craft gin makers of Old Tom, like York Gin, take the greatest care in the creation of their gins. Sweetening and flavouring is done subtly, with quality botanicals and the expertise of master distillers.

As a result, even though you get a hint of how historical Old Tom gins might have tasted, you don't get the full experience. This is because we want you to love the gin you drink - and believe us, you would not have loved the 18th Century version!

Making our Old Tom Gin

You will be pleased to learn that modern Old Tom gin makers avoid the 18th Century habit of using whatever sweet or strong flavours came to hand.

And today's distillers use a variety of tried and tested methods to create their Old Tom gins.

Some add sugar and other ingredients to a gin that has already been distilled - allowing their flavours to seep into the gin in a process called maceration.

At York Gin, we take our London Dry gin - a gold award winner in its own right - and add a small amount of sugar syrup.

This isn't any old syrup - it was created specifically by the nearby Michelin-starred Star Inn.

Herbs from the Star Inn's kitchen garden and the hedgerows of North Yorkshire, along with petals from the white rose of Yorkshire and Star Anise flavour the syrup.



Reviews & Praise for our Old Tom Gin

‘Arguably one of the best gins in the world regardless of genre - York Gin Old Tom is a must try, must taste, must have offering. It’s an unmissable gin in a sea of gin. It’s so good there’s not enough superlatives to do it justice. White Alba rose along with bronze fennel, star anise and angelica complete a complex syrup that really comes through to taste.’

- *Spirits Kiosk*

‘One of the best Old Toms out there. You can tell chefs have been involved in weaving the flavours together. The fennel adds a light touch of spice, while the added sweetness makes all the flavours linger beautifully on the finish.’

- *Olivier Ward, Editor, Spirits Beacon*

‘A delightfully elegant and complex nose of juniper, spice, and flower blossom. On the palate, juniper is at the fore, before an exceptionally well-integrated liquorice sweetness that lingers on the finish and leaves you wanting another sip.’

- *International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC)*



A selection of medals awarded to York Gin Old Tom

Old Tom Cocktails

The Classic Tom Collins



Fruity Bramble Collins



A perfect G&T

Recommended with Old Tom Gin

Tom Collins

The absolute Old Tom classic from the late 19th Century - refreshing and easy to make.

Half-fill a Collins glass, high-ball or tumbler with ice.

Add a double of Old Tom gin.

Add sugar syrup and lime or lemon juice to taste.

Top with ice and soda water - and stir.

Garnish with lemon and cocktail cherries.

Bramble Collins

A twist on the classic.

Muddle raspberries in the bottom of a tumbler.

Add ice, a double of Old Tom gin, then top with soda.

Garnish with fresh raspberries.

Gin & Tonic

York Gin Old Tom is wonderful in a G&T.

Use large ice cubes so they melt slowly.

Use a premium light tonic so as not to overpower the gin.

Garnish with a lemon twist or slice.

Other drinks to try with Old Tom gin:

* Martini

* Casino

* Martinez

... or just try neat over ice.

Old Tom's Origins

When William of Orange became King of England in 1689, he brought Dutch genever - the forerunner of gin - to England.

Over the next few decades, in English hands, this developed into 'Old Tom' gin - making it an invention of the very early 18th Century.

Old Tom is lighter than the malty genever, but is slightly sweeter and more full-bodied than London Dry - which came to dominate gin from the early 20th Century.

So, Old Tom is seen as the 'missing link' in the history of gin. If you asked for a gin during the 18th and 19th Centuries, you'd probably receive an Old Tom-style spirit.

The 'Gin Craze'

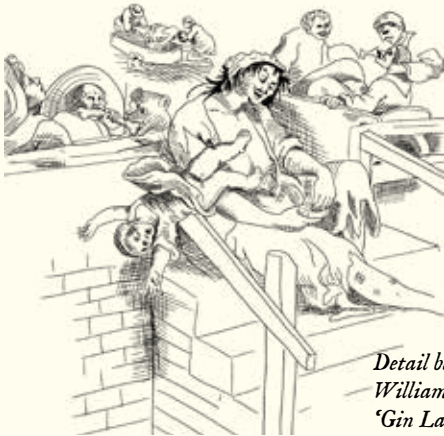
Old Tom and flavoured gins were the most prominent gin styles at the time of the 'Gin Craze' during the early 18th Century.

Under King William, making and selling spirits became easier than previously - as a result, production and consumption of gin went through the roof.

By 1730, over 7,000 shops in London were selling spirits, and gin was being distilled in up to a third of all London's homes!

At about 80% ABV, these spirits were incredibly strong. Many were watered down and flavoured. But we can't be sure exactly

G I N L A N E .



*Detail based on
William Hogarth's
'Gin Lane'*

how people mixed their spirits as so little consistent evidence survives. What we are sure about is that people were drinking often, and to excess.

William Hogarth's 'Gin Lane' - a powerful satirical engraving of the dangers of strong drink - dates from this period.

By the time of George II, a full-scale moral panic about drinking habits led to the Gin Act of 1736, which restricted the making and sale of gin.

As a result, much of the gin trade went underground - sometimes to be sold via a 'Puss 'n' Mew'.

Even fake 'funerals' were held to mark the demise of 'Madame' or 'Mother' Genever (the Dutch name for Juniper).

The Puss 'n' Mew

The history the Old Tom name is a mix of legend, myth and the odd bit of actual historical evidence. Certainly, cats and gin have long been associated.

In 1736, a London entrepreneur named Captain Dudley Bradstreet invented his Puss 'n' Mew gin vending machine to avoid the restrictions of the new Gin Acts.

A plaque in the shape of a cat was affixed to the outside of a house. Passers-by would push coins through the cat's mouth and a measure of gin would be poured from inside into a pipe - a tail or a paw. The buyer would catch the gin in a cup or perhaps even drink it directly. As the identity of the vendor could not be proven., prosecution under the act was avoided.



*The Gin Craze:
Buying gin
through a
domestic door
using a
Puss 'n' Mew
- to avoid
prosecution under
the Gin Acts.*

The idea was copied across the city. Cat plaques became commonplace - and 'Old Tom' became the nickname for gin.

A second theory about the origin of the Old Tom name comes from London distiller Joseph Boord. The company employed apprentice Thomas Norris and head distiller Thomas Chamberlain. The elder of the pair was distinguished by the moniker 'Old Tom'.

More sadly (but thankfully almost certainly falsely) some accounts claim that a cat drowned in a vat of gin - leading to the name Old Tom in the cat's memory.

But certainly, over time, the image of a cat became associated with Old Tom - as surviving labels and pub names show.

Making York Gin



Diagram showing our traditional method for making gin in our copper still 'Ebor'. The herb-infused sugar syrup is added to the distilled gin to produce our Old Tom.



History *in the* Tasting

We make some of the world's best gins in our sustainable York distillery, the first legal distillery in the ancient city.

We use traditional methods perfected over centuries of English gin making to create our range.

We are inspired by our city's incredible two thousand years of history, and gin making's centuries of stories and legends.